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ANGLO-AUSTRALIAN QUESTIONS.

THE FEDERATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN COLONIES.

The papers which appeared in our journal yesterday, published by the General Association for the Australian Colonies, in London, is the first practical step to realise a federation of the colonies. The distinctive principles of the plan were suggested by an article in this journal last October, but erroneously attributed to the *Argus*, in which it subsequently appeared.

The rapid changes which have transpired, even within a few months, increase alike the importance and difficulty of a federal union. There are joint interests, so clear and palpable, that no one could doubt the value of a common organization for their protection and development. If even objects of general interest could be accomplished by colonies singly, they could be probably effected more cheaply and at an earlier date by co-operation. It is certain that some without union cannot be effected at all. We might mention the last project which comprehends the entire colonies—the establishment of the electric telegraph in connection with Europe. This would require united and vigorous effort; the advantages would be common to all, but it would be quite possible for an intermediate colony to refuse all share in the expense, and even to charge for transit through its territory. It will be in its power to intercept communication until the other colonies submit to exaction.

We see also plainly that emigration to these colonies will be almost suspended for want of co-operation. It is a fact, true, that as water finds its level, so will labour and population. Victoria is enjoined by local patriots to keep back the funds devoted to this purpose, assured that whatever the other colonies expend, will not avail them against the attractions of a gold-field. A judicious scheme of immigration would be of the highest benefit to the Australian colonies. But of course, none are so foolish as to expend money to send population in another direction. Thus, the colonies, acting separately in self-defence, will be obliged to abandon measures which, under an equitable co-operation, would be productive of much benefit to them all.

The difficulties in adjusting the tariff are almost insuperable,—the interest of one colony for the moment is often pushed with a lofty indifference to its effect upon the other. The principle of compromise in legislation is unknown in this intercourse of rival communities. The recent discussion in reference to the Panama steam route shows how small the chance of any agreement by means of mere negotiation. That selfishness, which always and everywhere operates, becomes patriotism when it expends itself in behalf of "our own port," and "our preponderant numbers." Besides the subjects enumerated by Mr. Wextworth, which demand the federation, there are some departments of civil law which ought to be matters of common legislation throughout the colonies. Take for instance the marriage law. The South Australians by an overwhelming majority legalised marriage with a deceased wife's sister; Victoria talks of authorising divorces. The other colonies follow the English law. It seems dangerous and absurd for any small community to legislate alone on questions which form the very basis of our social life.

We have, of course, observed the adoption of the practical suggestions originally offered in this journal with great satisfaction. The idea of federation is as old as the hills, but there are some difficulties in its application which have to be removed. The gentlemen in London, most of them having formerly official connections with the colonies—Mr. Wextworth being one—have with unanimity concurred in the form of legislation, except in one point. The South Australians alone are hostile to the idea of remitting to a federation to fix the upper or minimum price of lands. The Association has asserted that the colonies should be equally represented in a federal Assembly; that the Assembly should be paramount, and its place of meeting fixed by the "senior Governor" of the federated colonies; and a veto should be directly exercised by the Crown. No colony would be compelled to join the federation, and the Imperial Parliament would only pass an enabling Act; the federation would ship itself, and act in any matter that added by unanimous consent to the range of federal action,—subject, of course, to the approbation of the Crown.

The following extract from the article referred to by the Association will show how in these points the gentlemen in London have seen eye to eye with ourselves.

"Whenever the question of federation shall assume a practical shape, it must be determined where shall be the seat of federal organization, and where the place of meeting for the legislature. The paramount system may, perhaps, for a few years meet the difficulty; but ultimately some definite locality must be chosen where we must deposit the staff of federal power. It is probable that, on the threshold of the rival claims of different colonies may create an obstacle not easily overcome. It is clear the Home Government is not in a position to establish federal government absolutely, and without the direct concurrence of the colonies themselves. Whatever powers are deposited with the federation must be abstracted from the local legislatures. Having once confided to their management these powers, it would be a matter of complaint were they withdrawn, except by their own consent."

"In any establishment of federal government, population and wealth must both have their weight. It is quite clear that if federal government were established without some balance, giving increased representation to remote localities, the objection which prompted the separation of all the surrounding colonies from New South Wales would oppose their reunion under any local government."

"The question however remains, how shall this federation be effected? We believe it might be accomplished, first by the action of the home Government. A law should be passed enabling the colonies to enter into engagements for defined purposes of common subject to the oversight and approval of the Crown. Having an enabling law, and not a compulsory enactment, they could either allow the power to slumber, or put it in motion at their pleasure. If two colonies—say Moreton Bay and New South Wales—chose to establish a federation, it would be valid so far as their interests were concerned. If acting in a liberal spirit, the Government of New South Wales and South Australia co-operate, there can be no question that the federation would speedily join. At some future time, when the federation had grown into its full proportion, the same points, which are now enveloped in some difficulty, would find their solution. It would then be found that the execution of the determination of the general body, and thus avoid, for a time at least, anything more than the establishment of a mere chamber of registration, which might be also a high court of appeal."

We have no doubt that much difficulty will arise in giving practical form to these views. Mr. DUFFY, in Victoria, has obtained a committee upon the subject, and will probably test the sincerity of the desire universally expressed to find some point of union. We should not be at all astonished, however, were some such principle set up, as once unfortunately found too much

favour in this colony, namely, that a federal system should be based solely on population. This of course never has been, and never will be tolerated by any but the most populous colony for the time being. The colonies must have an equal voice as in the senate of America. No doubt, where there are two federal chambers the popular branch may be based upon the census, the Senate being the check upon the tyranny of numbers. Where, however, there is but one House, the check must reside in itself. The views of Victoria may of course be affected by its local ambition. There are, notwithstanding, three colonies which, either existing or in prospect, will certainly federate without jealousy—South Australia, New South Wales, and Moreton Bay. The separation of the last from this territory is a question of time. Some of the greatest evils consequent upon subdivision would be prevented, and more perfect local self-government secured, were there some organization to preserve unity in all matters where the interests of the whole are one.

This subject will be frequently ventilated before it will take definite and permanent form. When like Mr. Wextworth and Mr. DEAS THOMSON concur with Mr. DUFFY in the desirableness of an object, it is clear that it has no slight claim on the legislative mind of the colonies.

[Sydney Morning Herald, June 12.]

COTTON CULTIVATION.

There is one unfailing topic which has been constantly mooted of late by the English journals, and which, even amid the excitement of a general election, is not lost sight of, and that is the supply of cotton. Lancashire is perpetually in terror. Thousands of human beings are dependent for their comfort and existence on the steady progress of the cotton manufacture. Yet that progress is exposed at any time to hazard. A war with America, a drought, or a blight in the cotton-growing States, would not only be the ruin of many capitalists, both in England and America, and reduce the comforts of all consumers of cotton goods, but would entail frightful misery on those communities where thousands of the labouring classes would be suddenly deprived of work, and of the means of subsistence. A human interest of almost colossal dimensions, is at the mercy of casualties. It is impossible to contemplate the spectacle of such a risk without anxiety, and without a wish to see some means adopted to diminish its pressure. The dependence of England for the supply of cotton is almost exclusively upon America. A few bales are received from other nations, but they are as nothing in comparison. No other manufacture is in such a desperate condition. Almost all the other raw materials that feed the industry of Britain are obtained from various places, so that if the supply is stopped in one quarter it flows freely from the other; or in the few instances where this may not be the case, the article produced is one less of necessity than luxury, and its use can be foregone without any wide-spread inconvenience, or it is capable of substitution by some other more accessible article. But a sudden stoppage of the supply of cotton from America, or even a serious falling off, could not be compensated for in any way. It would be an evil irreparable by any contrivance.

It is not merely an increase in the sources of supply that is needed: a positive and steady increase in the quantity produced is not less demanded. The quantity of cotton goods consumed has not only not reached its limit, but that limit seems to be indefinitely distant. And the capabilities of manufacture increase in an accelerated ratio. The constant improvements in machinery, whereby the process of manufacture is simplified and cheapened, and the growing practice of erecting mills on a large scale, creates an incessantly increased demand for the raw material. One of those modern mills which are ever springing up afresh in Lancashire, though standing itself on a few acres of ground, is capable of swallowing up in a year the produce of many plantations. And every fresh monster manufactory that is thus erected, demands, in order to keep it in constant and profitable work, that thousands of acres more should be brought under cultivation. The appetite of Lancashire for cotton is not only voracious, but almost insatiable. It demands not only that America should never fail in its supply, but that other parts of the world also should yield their tribute. The increasing demand for cotton fabrics stimulates this activity of manufacture. Not only is the population of the world increasing, but there is also a contemporaneous spreading of civilisation among races hitherto barbarous, and a growing diffusion of wealth, all calling for increased supply of manufactured articles, and for more than for cheap material for clothing.

The production of cotton is a branch of industry, therefore, that cannot well be overdone. For those parts of the earth's surface which are adapted to its growth there is a promising prospect. Industry there will always be in demand, and a market for its produce always open. What parts of the earth's surface are adapted for the successful culture of cotton has been discussed with great interest of late years. The plant is not a native of America, though the climate there is singularly favourable to its cultivation, and though since its first introduction it has spread with a rapidity only equalled by the cultivation of cereals in the Northern States. That America should be the only country in which this extensive cultivation of cotton is possible, is unlikely, and it is proved otherwise. The causes that have hindered the growth of the cotton plant in other localities have not been natural and unalterable, but are artificial and capable of removal. The necessary conditions of soil and climate coexist over a very large area of the earth's surface, but social, political, and economical causes have hitherto hindered a development that is yet possible. It remains to remove these hindrances and open up the capabilities of the soil to minister to man's advantage.

The cotton cultivation in America has been co-extensive with the increase of slavery. It is undeniable that but for the slave labour the plantations now productive could never have been brought under tillage at the rate at which they have been. But much as an enlarged cultivation of cotton is desirable, no humane or philanthropic person can desire to see an increase of slavery. The great social problem to be solved is to promote adequate cultivation by means of free labour. There are many who are ready to pronounce it impossible, but there must be others who will prove that it is possible. It cannot be that the production of one of the most valued fruits of the earth is inseparable from the degradation of vast masses of the human race.

It is part of the fortunate heritage of Australia that it is destined to bear no insignificant share in solving this problem, and in proving that cotton cultivation may be combined with free social institutions. A large part of the area of Australia is fit for cotton growing. There are samples of Australian cotton lying in our office

which might satisfy the most sceptical on this point, and which give the brightest promise for the future. But the cultivation has hitherto been too limited to be practically useful. The simple fact is, that it does not pay. But it must be made to pay. How to overcome the difficulty is one of the considerations most nearly affecting the future prosperity of the colony, and every one who helps to throw light upon it will deserve well of his country and the world. Great efforts are being made in India to promote cotton cultivation. Railways are being made, shallow rivers are being navigated, the tenure of land is being improved in order to remove those obstacles which have hitherto rendered the cultivation of cotton in that country unprofitable. The amount of patient and persevering labour which is being expended on this object in India is such as has no parallel in Australia, but which might well stimulate imitation. At present the matter has been left pretty much to chance. Direct encouragement has been refused by the Legislature, and only a few amateurs have concerned themselves with it. It would be worth while for the Agricultural Society, by the distribution of seeds to ascertain the limits within which the plant will grow. Even in America, the localities favourable to the production of the Sea Island cotton are limited. But a cotton of shorter staple, which, though inferior, is still valuable, is produced largely further inland. Many parts of Australia may also be found able to produce one species which are not fit for the other. Some experiments systematically conducted over a wide area of territory would soon throw light upon this point.

It should also be remembered that a new agricultural staple is wanted in the colony. A great anxiety exists to settle people on the soil. But settlement must be profitable, or all the land regulations in the world cannot force it. There are limits quickly reached to the cultivation of corn. There is no market accessible for surplus grain produce, and to satisfy the demand of Australia will call for but little extra tillage. If it can be once shown how to grow cotton so as to make it pay, then scope is at once opened up for prosperous occupation of the soil. The first great step in the commercial prosperity of Australia was the introduction of wool-growing; the second was the discovery of gold; the third will be the cultivation of cotton.

[Sydney Morning Herald, May 24.]

PAUPERISM AND EMIGRATION.

MR. WILLIAM HOWITT writes a letter to the *Times* to explain that there can be no difficulty in alleviating the distress existing in London, among the working classes, inasmuch as the Australian Land Fund, which he guesses may at the moment amount to half a million sterling, is available to pay the expense of their passage to Australia. English writers, as is natural, always look at emigration from an English point of view, but Mr. HOWITT, having sojourned in these colonies, ought also to be able to regard it from the Australian point of view. It is perfectly true that, under the Waste Lands Act, half the proceeds of the land sales were devoted to the importation of labour, though Mr. HOWITT as a professed Australian authority ought to know that since the new constitutions have come into force this arrangement is no longer necessarily adhered to. But though each colony still continues to remit money for the importation of labour, this money is remitted for the purpose of charity, but to the expense of an article of which the colonies stand in need, and which they require to be supplied of the best possible quality. That emigration relieves the pressure on the labour market of the mother country is doubtless a fact; but the colonists do not remit their money with this benevolent object in view. They seek their own interests, though in so doing they also benefit others. In the expenditure of the colonial emigration fund the primary object to be kept in view is to supply the colonies with labour suitable both in quantity and quality, and not to alleviate British pauperism. That, under the management of the Land and Emigration Commissioners, this rule has been reversed—that the money has been laid out more with an eye to relieve the mother country than to benefit the colonies—is one of the charges brought against their stewardship, and is the reason why the colonial Parliaments are all unanimous in dispensing with their future services. English authorities are apt to consider emigration solely as a last resource against destitution, and the colonies as convenient receptacles for the surplus population at any time of pressure. But colonists are not content to take this view. The land on which they have settled they look upon as something more than a mere vent for pauperism or crime. In their eyes it holds out a steady attraction to the emigrant at all times, and is not merely the last refuge from starvation. Its constant advancement and the progressive development of its resources demand a regular stream of immigration, and something more is needed than an occasional glut of labour when the home market is crowded, and then a corresponding dearth when times are prosperous in the mother country. As a general rule, stated in broad terms, it is perfectly true that Australia has room for population which Britain can conveniently spare; but, in practically applying this rule in detail, the interest of the mother country is often found to clash with that of the colony. Thus, in late years we have seen two opposite phenomena. At one time, when labour was superabundant in the rural districts of Britain, we have seen landowners palm off the most inferior and burdensome members of their parishes on the colonies; while at another time, when labour was rather scarce in the same localities, we have seen the same gentlemen endeavouring to hinder for recruits, and doing all in their power to prevent the useful and able-bodied peasantry from being wiled away from the country. The parent state shared with the colonies the expense of emigration, there would be some claim that it should be conducted so as to benefit equally the land the emigrants quit and that to which they go. But (convict emigration of course excepted) Great Britain has done little or nothing towards paying the expense of peopling Australia. The waste lands, it is true, which yield the fund for immigration, were once the property of the nation, but they have been handed over to the various colonies. And, moreover, the capital and labour that gave those lands their value, and made them saleable, have been mainly furnished by the colonists themselves. It is inevitable, therefore, that they should look upon immigration primarily as it affects their own interests, and only secondarily as it affects the interests of the parent state.

For the future, the importation of labour, so long as it remains a public concern at all, will be conducted directly under the auspices of the colonial governments, and the agents will select applicants in accordance with their suitable and not with regard to their poverty. In a few years, probably, artificial aids to emigration, will cease to be necessary; the stream of population will flow of its own accord. But till that time arrives, the money remitted by the colonial governments for the importation of labour will have to be spent not in clearing away every symptom of pauperism, as fast as it manifests itself in any locality in Great Britain, but in sending out the best class of emigrants that can be found willing to leave.

If Mr. HOWITT's plan of employing the balance in the hands of the Emigration Commissioners to send out the whole batch of London poor were attempted, he would probably discover that his advice was not altogether so good as he seems to think it. Many of them may have no wish to emigrate, and would be very reluctantly forced away from their homes. Many may be very unsuitable as emigrants, and may have been brought up to occupations for which there is little or no scope in the colony, or which, as a general rule, are more surely rewarded in the mother country, though there may be occasional slack. As it is, we observe that many of the distressed artisans complain bitterly of the labour test applied to them at the workhouses on their demanding relief. They are not fit, they allege, to do a day's work at breaking stones, and were they to be forced to do it they would destroy that delicacy of touch on which they are dependent for employment at their trade. It is obvious that this class would be very unsuited to meet the rough and shifting exigencies of colonial life. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that there are plenty of emigrants to be found who are both willing and suitable, and who have, therefore, the first claim on the colonial funds, and who are not to be passed over in favour of casual applicants for relief. There are the relatives, friends, and former neighbours of those who have already come out, and who are but too anxious to follow and rejoin them. Active and earnest emigration agents will never find any difficulty in spending the money entrusted to them; they will be under no necessity to go to the workhouses to find subjects for their bounty.

The abolition of the office of the Commissioners of Land and Emigration, or the restriction of its functions, which must now follow on the concession to the colonies of the control of their land fund, and on the appointment by them of their own emigration agents, will soon make a perceptible difference to Great Britain. The outlet to pauperism which has been pretty freely used will be to a great extent closed, and the Imperial Government will not improbably be forced to take upon itself the expense of sending away some of the surplus and burdensome population just as many improving landlords have already done.

[Sydney Morning Herald, May 29.]

THE NEW ELECTORAL ACT.

In any electoral law to be presented to the House, and such we infer will be one of the earliest measures submitted by Ministers, there can surely be no hesitation in making vote by ballot a part of it. The objections to the ballot in England are well-known to us all. We never thought anything of the most prominently insisted upon—that the ballot is un-English. It was once English to keep open the poll for fifteen days; to bring down to the election, hired bullies and pugilists; to keep up a succession of fights round the hustings. It was English for a candidate to spend a fortune in getting a seat, English for the potwoppers to take bribes in both hands, to hold back to the last day, then perhaps not to vote at all. This scene of blackguardism was the subject of elaborate eulogy—it excited public spirit in the people; made candidates acquainted with their constituents; cultivated the condescension of the higher classes, and stimulated the mainly courage of the lower! It was highly edifying to foreigners in the time of Fox to see the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire kissing a butcher in the public streets, as the price of a vote. All these things were English; open voting is English too.

The only real reason for resisting the ballot in England is that it would tend to disturb the influence of the aristocracy in the country districts. It must be recollected that influence immemorial and hereditary, is founded on rank, property, and often on beneficence. The great inducement of a landlord to spend his money in the purchase and improvement of farms rather than in the funds, is the social consideration it secures him. He naturally wishes to retain the moral authority of his position, and to find among his tenants and neighbours his political adherents and supporters. The spirit of contradiction in human nature often shows itself in resistance to this natural consequence of relative positions of landlord and tenant. Thus, the refractory voter is provoked and punished, and cries out for the ballot. We question if the general result to landlords of the ballot, except those of a worthless sort, would be different from open voting. When pride did not impel contradiction, men would prefer to support those whom they best knew, and from whom they are accustomed to receive some kindness and indulgence. The same secret voting, too, which would reduce the coercive power of the landlord, would abate the periculous energy of that tacit confederation, by the force of which mere opposition to a landlord is an act of civism and political virtue. It is very true that vote by ballot is said to lead to lying promises, all sorts of treachery and meanness. Those who vote by it are, however, rarely canvassed, and promises which are felt to be worth nothing, would not be commonly sought after. The objection is answered by the practice of the higher classes themselves, who have ballot in their clubs—even in our Assembly, committees are subject to the same process of appointment.

One of the most eloquent opponents of the ballot, SIR JOHN STURT, has furnished the artillery of his enemies, and very amusing it is. He shows pretty clearly that the ballot does not secure inviolable secrecy, and that it does not prevent the possibility of bribery. Had he, however, taken the opposite side, he would have torn such arguments to tatters. He was the last man to see that approximation is all any law can effect. He puts the following case:—"The Attorney would say to the candidate, there is my list of promises, if you come in I will have five thousand pounds." He then supposes that this attorney will open a kind of share-list of voters who become entitled to their part of the £5000, supposing it to be won; and thus, either the candidate must succeed, or the bribe would be forfeited. It supposes the Parliament would have no means of unseating the candidate who owed his election to an arrangement like this; or that what 500 voters knew could be covered with an impenetrable veil of impunity.

Of course no one can really fancy that these

objections have the smallest weight in Australia. The direct influence of property is nothing. A man with a hundred thousand pounds probably could not command the vote of his shopman. At the last general election, so the story goes, Archbishop POLDINO took the trouble to go to Parramatta to vote for a candidate, and his coachman took the same opportunity to slip off the box, and record his vote on the other side. Thus they might just as well have paired off, unless indeed for the sake of discharging a civic duty and for the value of an example of so much independence and so much toleration.

That independence is, however, far from complete. In this colony it is only one-sided. Neither the habit nor public sentiment of the colony will allow the violent control of voters by the upper classes. There is, on the contrary, a strong tendency in an active party to exclude them from even their numerical proportion of due weight in public affairs. Coercion is exercised over the lower class by the idlers, and loafers, and small demagogues.

The grinding, insulting, irresponsible coercion of the loud talking and dominating statesmen of the workshop has superseded the "notice to quit." Thus it often happens that the voter has to make his selection of hurling the feelings of a kind employer, who nevertheless he knows will respect his right to vote as he pleases, and the indescribable but wearying annoyances which small tyrants exercise over those who dare to differ with them. It is quite possible, by the ballot, to secure to every man the means of quietly fulfilling his duty as a citizen according to his conscience. In times of great excitement, men vote under the apprehension of personal danger; they are compelled to go by stealth, unless they go with the most boisterous of the people. In the recent Melbourne election one set of men threatened to "stifle" another little knot whose noise was offensive. One of these immediately retaliated with a sharp instrument, which had it not been arrested by a copy of the *Argus*, would have been fatal in its consequences. Had these men, however, quietly given their votes, and then returned home, instead of stinging and stabbing one another, conduct so disgraceful and cowardly would have been prevented. As it was, there can be no doubt that the ballot tended to prevent much violence, as well as those after disputes and enmities which result from a severely contested election.

The ballot in this city has not yet been fairly tried. The places of voting were too few. It is scarcely necessary to confine the voting to one day, where it is taken by the ballot, in so large a city. At all events, the accommodation should leave no excuse for non voters. The election was orderly, and though not precisely what we might have wished, the result was infinitely better than might have been feared. On the whole, the Sydney election is all in favour of the application of the ballot in this colony. The experience of the other colonies is already well known.

[Sydney Morning Herald, May 29.]

THE MAIL SERVICE.

MR. RUTLEDGE moved in the Legislative Assembly of Victoria, on the 29th ultimo, the following resolution:—"That in the opinion of this House, it is both inexpedient and injurious to the public service to detain the English mail ships in Hobson's Bay on their passage to and from Sydney to Great Britain, longer than the few hours absolutely necessary for shipment and landing of passengers and mails—say six hours on the homeward, and one hour on the outward passage, between sunrise and sunset." The terms of the contract require a detention in Hobson's Bay of thirty-six hours on the outward passage and forty-eight hours on the homeward passage. This detention the hon. member maintained was quite unnecessary, and while yielding no advantage whatever to Melbourne, was a decided disadvantage to Sydney. He further stated that many leading merchants entirely agreed with his view of the case, and looked upon the detention as only injurious to the efficiency of the mail service. The hon. member, however, found no support for his motion within the walls of the Assembly, and only got soundly rated for advocating the claims of Sydney.

But though the motion of Mr. RUTLEDGE has been unceremoniously buried by the Victorian Assembly, the matter to which it refers is one which it will be the duty of the Government of New South Wales to bring before the notice of the Lords of the Treasury. The contract was drawn up hastily, and necessarily without the opportunity of consulting the colonial Governments. The time-table is capable of revision, so as better to adjust the course of post, and some other minor details might be reconsidered.

Whatever detention of the mail vessels in Hobson's Bay is necessary to do justice to the commerce and correspondence of Victoria, it is the unquestionable right of that colony to secure, but no more. Any delay beyond this is simply an injustice to New South Wales, which, as it contributes *pro rata* to the subsidy, has equal claims to have its interests subserved to the utmost which is possible. An interval of forty-eight hours is certainly not too much to allow the mercantile community to read, ponder, and reply to their advisers from England. Indeed it is barely enough, and it is for this reason that a revision of the time-table is demanded in the interest of the Sydney merchants, inasmuch as at present forty-eight hours is the maximum time allowed for the perusal of correspondence and the preparation of replies, and this limited time is exposed to diminution whenever the outward steamers may make a longer passage than is allowed for. But on the arrival of the steamer at Melbourne with the English mails there is no need of haste about answering them; the return mail does not depart for more than a week. The steamer having landed her passengers, cargo, and letter-bags, has no further business in Hobson's Bay; all that remains is that she should make her way as fast as possible to Sydney, to deliver the rest of her mail. To keep her idly at anchor in Port Phillip till a fixed number of hours have expired is simply to detract from the benefits the mail service renders to Sydney, without in the slightest degree benefiting Melbourne.

On the return voyage the steamer has only to take up at Melbourne the mails, freights, and passengers that may be ready. The correspondence that is to be posted is not based on any inter-colonial advice the mail steamer may have brought on from Sydney, but is the reply to the English correspondence, that has been in hand for more than a week. There is no necessity, therefore, for the steamer to wait for the small inter-colonial mail it may have brought to be delivered and perused. It is said that when the rates of freight are reduced, most of the gold will be forwarded to England by the steamers, and that a considerable detention will be necessary to make up the parcels and put them on board. Whatever detention

may be absolutely necessary let it be allowed, but New South Wales is entitled to claim that the limit of absolute necessity should not be exceeded.

Till the withdrawal of the *Onesida* is remedied by the substitution of another vessel, the departures of the mail ships from Melbourne for Suva will necessarily be irregular and uncertain. Much will depend on the time required for docking and cleaning the steamers, and it will not be possible generally to give notice in Melbourne beforehand of the exact date at which the mail will close. On the occasion of the recent trip of the *Simla*, for instance, the mercantile community of Melbourne had been led to expect that she would not sail till the 15th of June, and had a very short notice of the true date of sailing. So long as such uncertainties prevail, there is reason for a detention sufficiently long to allow of correspondence being prepared. But when the Mail Company has perfected its arrangements, which there is reason to hope will be done very soon, the dates of arrival and departure will be known long beforehand, and there will be no longer any reason for not commencing correspondence till the steamer is signalled. The merchants will know exactly when to look for the steamer, almost to an hour, and can so be prepared. Moreover, the electric telegraph from Melbourne to Queensland gives notice at the capital of the appearance of the steamer at the Heads some hours before her arrival at Hobson's Bay, and all this additional time is available for putting the finishing stroke to correspondence that has been prepared. When the electric telegraph is completed between Sydney and Melbourne, which it will be in the course of about a year, it will be known with still greater accuracy when the steamer may be expected in Hobson's Bay, and all causes for detaining her in that port on account of the uncertainty as to the date of her arrival will be removed. There is good reason therefore why the Executive of New South Wales should press on the Home Government the propriety of altering that portion of the contract which compels the company to detain their vessels, whether there is occasion for it or not, a fixed number of hours in Hobson's Bay. Meanwhile, so long as the mail service is disarranged by the paucity of steamers available, every hour is precious, and it is to the interest of Melbourne as much as Sydney to create no needless delay, but to let the mail ships move forward as quickly as possible.

[Sydney Morning Herald, June 5.]

THE VICTORIAN LAND BILL.

WE turn with considerable interest to the discussion in the Victorian Parliament on the Land Bill. Distant from the local passion which pervades every subject, we are anxious to understand with whom is the truth, and to gather up the useful hints which will guide our Legislature to a wise and lasting policy. The two parties in Victoria who compete for power, inevitably fall into the error of competitors—both misunderstand, and both misrepresent each other's history, pledges, and intentions. It will be one of the worst effects possible from party action if a sound land bill be rendered impossible by obstinacy on the one side, or by an out-bidding for popularity on the other.

The Victorian Land Bill is intended to carry out resolutions adopted by the House some time ago. These resolutions were affirmed by a large majority. This Bill repeals the Orders in Council, and cancels the rights under them. To the persons in possession certificates of occupation will issue. The occupier will pay a rent; this will be fixed for five years; the rate will be determined by the Crown. The occupier for the time being will be entitled to try its fairness in the Supreme Court. The valuation of a run will take in its situation—its fertility—its vicinity to population. Five years' leases, or certificates, will be given to enable the sheep-farmer to have some fixity of tenure. But the Government will be entitled to enter on these runs, survey and sell them. The sale of land will be by auction, in small lots, as well as larger lots, and at the upset price of one pound.

One strong objection to this bill on the part of the Opposition is that it gives the squatters a right in perpetuity. The exclusion of the auction principle, and fixing the rental by valuation, certainly protects the squatter against any other squatter, or any oppressive competition, but the rent must be settled by the value of the land; and the Crown may resume without compensation. To determine whether this plan is or is not just and useful, we must look at what would be the effect of the opposite scheme—annual occupation, and competition by auction. A class of men would probably appear who would harass sheep farmers with threats of ruin. Their own utmost loss would be his if he rents, he loss of the occupier would be his if he rents, and which cannot be removed without great risk. The occupier, knowing that every fixed improvement, every attempt to realise the comfort of civilisation, might rouse up competitors, would be nothing but an Arab. We do not say that the vengeance of the colony may not require that the squatters should be punished for the years of prosperity they have enjoyed; we do not assert that it would be wrong for the Crown to discourage anything like fixation in this kind of industry. It may be desirable to tell the people of Europe that any man may bid his neighbour out of his house and home, but let the facts be fairly considered. It is useless to expect that sheep-farming will thrive if all the conditions of prosperity are withheld. Then, would the State gain by disturbing the squatters in occupation? Were all the runs in the colony to be put up at auction together, they would not realise a fair rental. Were the fee simple of the land offered without reserve, it would fetch next to nothing. Here is the great fallacy of many who say,—What is the worth of any thing, but as much money as 'twill bring? Land, in a crowded population, may be worth no more than its price, but were all the colonial lands sold off at once, it would be found before the last lot came under the hammer the buyers at the worst price would be exhausted. We have the raw material for great wealth; the value of that material is prospective.

The idea of Mr. DUFFY, whose speech was a very effective one, is, that the Government should get rid of the squatters, and extinguish all rights, whatever they may be. The proposed Bill, on the contrary, gives the squatters of the present day a right of possession against every other squatter for all time coming. Without doubt, this is the effect of the measure. The check against abuse is, that the squatter must pay the full value in his rental, estimated every five years, and must go out altogether if the land be required for sale. Mr. DUFFY would prefer extinguishing the squatters' claims, either by compensation or declaring them invalid, and then to adopt the best plan to secure the fullest revenue the land would yield. This is a question for serious deliberation—Will any body gain by putting out the present occupant, if he be made to pay the full value of his run?

essentially that a child might extend or contract the length of the whole as a grown person. The second table is circular, dividing into two parts, which may be considered (with connecting pieces) to the ends of the larger table already noticed. When thus extended the length of the whole is 32 feet. These tables are supported in the centre by a massive carved pillar and are standard, and at the ends by carved legs. The continuous leaf has been taken as the basis of the design of these carvings; wreaths of this leaf are represented spirally round the pillar and legs. The chairs (of porocco seated) are in the same style. The desperses or windows are of rich crimson and gold embroidered satin, and are exceedingly tasteful.

WITT and PEARSON.

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